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PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 251232Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6028
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS NDJAMENA 000053

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: DARFUR REBEL BAKHIT PREVIEWS NEW REBEL UNIFICATION

11. (SBU) Summary: Sudanese rebel Adam Bakhit informed N'Djamena Emboffs January 18 that he and his associates were forming a "united front" encompassing five rebel factions, with participants from SLM/Unity; SLM (Khamis Abdullah); JEM (Bahr Idriss); NMRD (Abdel-Karim) and URFF. Bakhit criticized Sudan rebel groups which have accepted Chadian support in exchange for assistance against Chadian rebels, which most likely reflects his negative view of past JEM assistance to Chad government operations against Chadian rebel groups. End Summary

Rebel Unification

12. (SBU) SLM/Unity will join five other groups to form a "united front" group to achieve the goals of the Darfur people, Adam Bakhit told DCM and poloff during a meeting on January 18 to discuss Sudanese rebel unification efforts. The "united front" will include five rebel factions, with participants from SLM/Unity; SLM (Khamis Abdullah); JEM (Bahr Idriss); NMRD (Abdel-Karim) and URFF. Bakhit said that when various rebel leaders were in Libya for the Tripoli talks, they decided that there was a need for a new group to unite the various rebel factions under one council. This group would then negotiate with the government on a peace agreement, which would tie the situation in Darfur to the situation in southern Sudan. According to Bakhit, the new "unity group" is scheduled to be in N'djamena the week of January 22 and is scheduled come to an agreement on when and where to announce the new unified coalition.

13. (SBU) According to Bakhit, the "united front" group shares his goals for Darfur, namely autonomy within a federal system, as in Southern Sudan. "While its not easy to work with the government of Sudan.... we do not want to be separate -- particularly because Arab countries will support Sudan against us." He added that "our future is tied with the situation of the south," implying that if South Sudan votes for independence Darfur would seek the same. Bakhit also acknowledged that one of the failures of the various rebel groups has been that they have not "created a good leader like John Garang" and asked for international community support of the new group's efforts to find a new leader. In explanation as to why he was in N'djamena, Bakhit said that he was on "sick leave" due to a back injury and needed to visit the US to receive medical care. Bakhit requested help obtaining US visas for himself and his family. He explained that financial support for treatment would be provided by Sudanese philanthropists.

Relations between Chad and Sudan

¶4. (SBU) Bakhit called the situation on the Chad-Sudan border "tense." He said the real issue is the exasperation the Sudanese feel at Chadian incursions into their territory. Although there has been a lull in the aerial bombardments, no political or diplomatic process has begun between the two countries, he said. Bakhit believes that "the problem is not the Chadians supporting the Sudanese rebels with weapons" but using those rebels to attack Chadian rebels. Bakhit commented that if he were to accept Chadian backing and arms to use against Chadian rebels the situation at the border would become much worse. Such a situation would not be good for him and would not end the conflict between Chad and Sudan.

Comment:

¶5. Bakhit's rejection of Chadian manipulation of Sudanese rebel groups most likely reflects his views on the JEM which has assisted the Government of Chad to push back Chadian rebels in the past.
NIGRO